
Research on Assessment Mechanism of Educational Achievements in Sino-Foreign Cooperative Running Schools in China

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Abstract:

In the context of economic globalization and educational globalization, China is increasingly becoming the world's largest transnational higher education import Country. The Sino-foreign cooperative running school is the main embodiment of educational internationalization of Chinese higher education. In this paper, the joint programs with degrees awarding in higher education is the main discussing object. During the practice, the advantages and disadvantages of this cooperation have been emerged, and the corresponding remedies have been developed by administrative institutions at different levels. Yet, in the perspective of writer, there is still not enough assessment criteria and mechanism to measure the educational outcomes of these schools. Therefore, the writer advocated that efforts should be made in three levels to construct and improve the assessment criteria of educational achievements in Sino-foreign cooperative schools.

Key Words: Chinese Higher Education, Assessment Mechanism, Sino-Foreign Cooperative Running Schools

Sino-foreign cooperative running schools have become an irreplaceable part in the area of Chinese higher education. They refer to cooperative educational programs or institutions established by both Chinese schools and foreign bodies, individuals or organizations. The teaching places and campuses are in Chinese mainland and target students are Chinese citizens (Lin & Liu, 2009). According to the review and summary of Lin and Liu (2007), the current types of Sino-foreign joint education institutions can be divided into two kinds: independent schools and non-independent ones. For the former type, it can be subdivided into institutions with degree and without degree awarding; for the latter, it covers joint programs (with and without degree awarding) and joint secondary colleges (with and without degree awarding). The distinct feature of *the joint programs with degrees awarding in higher education*, is that the whole running process is worked out by both Chinese and foreign partners and it is requested to introduce overseas high-quality educational resources including qualified curriculum and courses into Chinese campus (Lin & Liu, 2007).

Statistics shows that, by the first half of 2018, there were 2342 cooperatively-run projects and programs operating in Chinese mainland, including 1090 institutions above the undergraduate level (MOE, 2018). The domain foreign partners are from developed nations like the USA, Australia, the UK, and Japan. And the dominant majors are economics, management, information technology, mechanical engineering (Lin & Liu, 2009) and other science majors, because there is no great difference in concepts, contents and teaching methods in these areas between in China and abroad, when comparing with the liberal arts teaching.

Over the past few decades, economic internationalization and globalization have given tertiary institutions opportunities and challenges at the same time. Having experienced the reform and opening-up policy (after 1978), entered WTO (2001) and etc., China has to be integrated into the tide of world economic development both from subjective and objective reasons, and education is bound to be influenced and guided by market economy. In terms of political supports, there are systematic and normative regulations and policies to norm and safeguard the developments of cooperation, both in China and overseas. Such as the “Temporary Provisions on Sino-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools” (Chinese Ministry of Education, 1995); the “Regulations of the People’s Republic of China on Sino-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools” (State Council, 2003); the “Implementation Methods for Regulations of the People’s Republic of China on Sino-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools”(MOE, 2004); the “Opinions of the Ministry of Education on Some Issues Concerning Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running schools” (MOE, 2006); the “Education Ministry’s Notice on Further Regulating School Administration Cooperation with Foreign Partners” (MOE, 2007). Overseas, the UK published the “Code of Practice for Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Education: Collaborative Provision” (QAA, 1999); Australia successively proposed the “Code of Ethical Practice in the Provision of Offshore Education and Educational Services by

Australia Higher Education Institutions” (1995); the “Provision of Education to International Students: Code and Guidelines for Australian Universities” (2001); and the “Transnational Quality Strategy” (2005).

With all of these economic developments and political supports, Chinese government has welcome and absorbed 1) prestigious foreign institutions with outstanding academic capabilities; 2) cooperation in newly emerging and urgent needed sectors and majors; 3) Emphasis on cooperation in less developed regions (Qin, 2009). Yet, on the other hand, researchers and regulators admit that the Sino-foreign cooperative institutions are far from satisfactory and outstanding. Problems are and are not limited to 1) lagged policy-making processes; 2) inconsistent cooperative goals of partners; 3) unbalanced geographical distribution; 4) unplanned and low-quality major arrangements; 5) low-level cooperation (Qin, 2009; Zhou, 2009); 6) unsatisfactory education quality (Zhou, 2009; Lin & Liu, 2009); 7) absent special scrutinizing or evaluation system (Lin & Liu, 2007).

Besides, the writer proposes that ethic issues among cooperation should call for increasingly more attention. Since there are differences in social systems, historical developments and economic conditions between the output countries and China, there are bound to huge cultural conflicts and moral and ethical collisions. As the resource received side, China’s education sovereignty, cultural security and public welfare of higher education are in the risks of threat and invasion. Governmental level policies and systems alone cannot reduce these dangers. Furthermore, academic ecosystems face the situation of academic industrialization globally (Oleksiyenko, 2018). With the advent of knowledge economic era, the relationship between education and economy is far closer ever. The higher education has become a prominent intellectual industry and education participants are becoming “knowledge workers” gradually. In proposing high requests for higher education, schools should serve for training the talents of high quality and for coordinated development of the economic society. In this case, being an important supplementary form of public education, the cooperative institutions excessively pursue economic interests as the teaching target. Specifically, in the vast majority of cooperative schools, the curriculums are set with clear preferences, paying more attention to the practicality rather than the academic technicality. In this circumstance, students excessively strengthen internships and the economic outcomes of learning. As a result, the cooperative running higher education has become an industry with limited academic output and poor prospects for high-quality cooperation.

Based on the status quo of inequality and unoptimism, the Chinese government and the Ministry of Education decided to terminate 234 Sino-foreign cooperative running schools and projects with a bachelor’s degree or above, and the list has been published on the portal website of the MOE (2018). This is an important step in improving and innovating the mode of Sino-foreign cooperative school supervision currently, and further, is a symbol of policy direction of resolutely promoting the elimination, optimization and promotion. Taking this as a warning,

existing schools and programs are racing to reform and innovate. Current improvements and reforms focus on quality assurance mechanism construction, in details, on access permission and running process. For instance, formulating reasonable quality standards to clarify partners' educational motivations, academic competence and running objectives before cooperation (Zhou, 2009); increasing requirements of running certification of foreign institutes (Lin & Liu, 2009); designing an internal quality evaluation system to regulate general and individual conductions (Lin & Liu, 2007) and etc.

The current vacancy in this field is mainly in the area of assessment criteria and mechanism to measure the educational outcomes (rather than only in the process). In contemporary higher education environment in China, the academic achievements are still the direct reflections of the educational effectiveness. Therefore, the author advocates ***construction and improvement of assessment criteria of educational achievements in Sino-foreign cooperative running schools in Chinese higher education***. Efforts should be made at supranational level, partners' level and education participants' level, respectively.

SUPERSTRUCTURE

Firstly, in superstructure level, an advanced and unified *assurance and assessment system* should be created and popularized worldwide, to supervise and safeguard the educational outcomes under a standard framework or criteria. Currently, the researchers have already put forward common policy requirements, yet most of emphases are put on the assessment of educational quality, or say, the quality of teaching processes and organizing processes. In the late educational assessments, teaching processes are treated much more important than teaching outcomes, however, I think it is a little be "hypercorrection". On this occasion, a supranational educational assurance and assessment mechanism is of necessary. In consideration of economic imbalance, cultural diversity and ethical issues, some international or regional NGO, such as UNESCO, OECD and etc. are the ideal regulators. UNESCO is one of the most important international organization for governments to discuss issues related to education, science and cultures, and an important coordinating and guiding agency for international education. It has played an important role in promoting the internationalization of higher education and ensuring the quality of transnational higher education. Another international non-governmental organization, OECD, has also played a significant role in promoting the development of transnational higher education. In the past decades, the two organizations jointly initiated and developed a series of international education service and trade forums, and formulated policy guidelines like "Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education (2003)". They have extensive experience and ways to assure quality, such as assessment, audit and accreditation. In summary, there is reason to believe that they have potential and ability to measure the output of cross-border higher education.

STRUCTURE

Secondly, in educational structure, there should be introduced horizontal competition standards to evaluate and upgrade the academic outcomes among peer institutions. Take a similar example, the English major students in Chinese universities and colleges have to pass the Test for English Majors Band 4 (TEM4) or/and TEM8 during their academic years; similarly, all the non-English major students have to pass College English Test Band 4 (CET4) or/and CET6 during their college years. From the perspective of Chinese universities and colleges, these nationwide exams are methods to prove their scholarly attainments, more importantly, universities and colleges use the passing rate as an indicator of inter-school competition, the rank of rate in national English exams can promote and urge schools' teaching reforms and progresses. Objectively, competitions among institutions ensure the running quality and academic results of schools, therefore, they are worthy of recommendation. It is admitted that the Chinese examination-oriented system is outdated and has been criticized, my view above is not to praise and advocate examinations, but to seek a unified standard to be an index of inter-school competitions, therefore, to stimulate the positive results.

UNDERSTRUCTURE

Thirdly, within institutions, educators and learners are the direct creators and beneficiaries of academic outcomes, no matter in traditional schools or in Sino-foreign ones, hence, their impacts should not be ignored. There are at least three indications can be listed that directly affect the educational achievements: 1) encouraging teachers and students pursue academic attainments and including these achievements into assessment criteria of running outcomes. As reviewed above, most Sino-foreign schools lay emphasis on vocational trainings or other courses with low academic requirements, and Business Schools and Computer Schools are most prevalent and dominate cooperative areas. As a result, the scientific research outcomes are limited, partial and imbalance. Advocating individuals' research attainments might increase the academic competence of Sino-foreign cooperative schools, therefore upgrading the social and academic influence of these institutions; 2) employment situations of graduates should be included into assessment index. Specifically, whether the value of diplomas can ensure their competitiveness in job-hunting, and whether students can apply what they have learned from the cooperative institutions to working places, are the mirrors of educational validity. If there is a long-term supervision on employment rate and employment trend, it is bound to have a long-term monitoring effect on teaching achievements. 3) It is of great significance to introduce the *supervisor system* and *inspectorship system*. In the postgraduate stage, students are guided and supervised by their own supervisors to pursue academic developments, while at the undergraduate level, they have only classroom teachers and instructors which means it is little academic guidance provided after classes. To sum up, if the supervisor system is introduced in the undergraduate stage in Sino-foreign Cooperative schools, the overall academic habits and abilities of undergraduate students can be greatly improved; their academic potentials in future can be stimulated as well. Finally, the comprehensive competitiveness of cooperative schools will be improved. Analogically, an inspectorship system can be active and immediate quality

assurance of teaching process, and then, ensures the effect of educational outcomes. Combing the two mechanisms, it would maximize efficiency of running schools from the understructure stage.

China's higher education needs to be internationalized to respond to the call of globalization. Sinoforeign cooperation in running schools is undoubtedly a good attempt. With the support of crossboundary policy supports, the joint efforts of partners and individual academic contributions, the quality of running processes and educational achievements can healthily compete and develop.

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